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REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the consideration given the present application. Claims 1, 2, 4, 16, 21, 23, and 31-35 are pending. Claims 1 and 21 are independent. Claims 1, 21, 32, 34, and 35 are amended for clarity.

Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4, 16, 21, 23, and 31-35 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fano (U.S. 6,317,718).

To expedite prosecution, independent claim 1 is amended to recite a shopping assistance method and service system having a combination of steps, including determining a geographical search parameter in dependence both on a enquiry-device location and its selected functional significance, wherein different functional significances result in different geographic search parameter values.

Independent claim 21 is amended to recite a shopping assistance service system having a combination of elements, including a second database subsystem for carrying out a second location-dependent search to find an answer to the shopping enquiry using both the enquiry-device location and its selected functional significance to control the geographical coverage of the search, wherein different functional significances result in different geographic search parameter values.

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Fano does not disclose or suggest a shopping assistance method or service system having the combinations of steps of claim 1 or elements of claim 21.

The Office Action relies on two passages in Fano. The first, "Goal Specification" at column 47, lines 40-48, describes a user who selects, in advance from a list of malls, a mall to be visited. This appears to result in a mobile device "knowing" the geographical extent of the mall to be visited, thereby enabling the mobile device to recognize when the user arrives at the mall (see line 48). On page 2, the Office Action characterizes this portion of Fano as disclosing identifying a functional significance of the user's location. Applicants cannot understand the basis for this conclusion. Certainly, this excerpt does not suggest the claim 1 step of "selecting from multiple enquirer-independent functional significances known to the service system, a functional significance for the enquiry device location by carrying out a first location-dependent database search using the enquiry-device geographic location as input."

The second passage of Fano relied on in the Office Action is "The Predictive Value of Location" at column 48, line 45, through column 49, line 35. This section discusses using the nature of a user's current location (e.g., bowling alley, post office, etc.) to determine the type of information likely to be useful (see column 48, line 58). However, this portion of Fano does not disclose determining a geographical

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search parameter in dependence both on the enquiry-device location and its selected functional significance, different functional significances resulting in different geographic search parameter values as required by Applicants' amended claim 1. Nor does this part of Fano disclose the claim 21 requirement for a second database subsystem for carrying out a second location-dependent search to find an answer to the shopping enquiry using both the enquiry-device location and its selected functional significance to control the geographical coverage of the search, wherein different functional significances result in different geographic search parameter values.

Based on the Office Action, it appears the Examiner has failed to appreciate the essence of Applicants' contribution to the art as defined by amended independent claims 1 and 21, which indicate the functional significance of a user's current location is used to control the scope of a geographic search parameter or the geographical coverage of a search. A geographic search parameter or geographic coverage of a search is not the same as "determining a user's location and applying some functional significance to that location in order to provide the user with location-specific information," as the claims of the present application are mischaracterized on page 3 of the Office Action.

Applicants cannot agree with the assertion on pages 3 and 4 of the Office Action that combining the above-noted sections of Fano results in the method of Applicants' independent claim 1 for the simple

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reason that the relied-on portions of Fano do not disclose or suggest that a geographic search parameter should be varied according to the functional significance of a user's current location. In Fano, a search may be geographically constrained to the mall (see, e.g., column 48, line 26). In fact, Fano's preferred search strategy appears to involve searching local establishments based on user location. If the user requests alternatives, there is a search of the whole mall (see column 49, lines 27-30). Different functional significances of the user's current location do not result in different geographic scopes to a search as is implicit in the presently claimed invention.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that Fano does not render obvious Applicants' claimed invention as set forth in independent claims 1 and 21. The remaining claims depend directly or indirectly on and are allowable with independent claims 1 and 21. Favorable reconsideration and allowance are in order, and such action is respectfully requested.

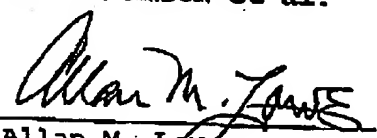
To the extent necessary, Applicants hereby request any required extension of time not otherwise requested and hereby authorize the Commissioner to charge any prescribed fees not otherwise provided for,

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including application processing, extension, and extra claims fees, to
Deposit Account No. 08-2025.

Respectfully submitted,
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